



ABOVE AND BELOW Extremeley rare and only discovered five years ago is the *Camellia amplexicaulis*.



Ever reliable *Camellia*

THE EVER RELIABLE CAMELLIA COMES IN A RANGE OF SHAPES, SIZES AND COLOUR. DAVID MUSKER SHARES FOUR OF HIS FAVOURITES, TWO OF WHICH WERE ONLY DISCOVERED FIVE YEARS AGO, AN HOUR FROM THE HANOI AIRPORT IN VIETNAM.

Camellias have been planted successfully in Australian gardens for many years. They remain popular because of their reliability and the huge variety of growth habits and flowers, making them appealing to many gardeners. I think they look and perform best in a garden bed, alongside other plants as opposed to being planted in isolation as a specimen in a lawn. They hedge well and can be easily pruned to shape and kept in shape with little effort. Once established they are the hardest of plants that handle our conditions well.

For the modern market many varieties of style have been developed keeping this plant popular with gardeners.

A useful newcomer is Slim 'n' Trim, as its name indicates this camellia is perfect for smaller spaces, as its habit is narrow and compact, growing well in pots it produces single rose pink flowers on mass in Autumn. It is perfectly suited to low compact hedging, containers and topiary. It grows well in full sun as it is hardy and is well worth trying to find. It is a new release so be prepared for a search.

I have chosen to feature four very different Camellias that I think are worthy of attention.

***Camellia japonica* 'tinsie'**
Camellia japonica 'tinsie' has glossy dark green leaves and deep red flowers with a white centre, making it quite dramatic. The flower is comparatively small but striking and is borne from mid winter to spring. Tinsie should be easy to find in your local nursery, remember the striking red and white flowers.

Camellia tsaii
Camellia tsaii has a delicate growth habit to two metres and small white flowers which hang in abundance from the weeping stems. The new

growth on this amazing plant is bronze in colour and the overall effect from tinsie is of a gentle weeping camellia with elegant leaves and small but clear white flowers. A sunny or part shaded position in the garden protected from hot north winds will ensure that this camellia performs at its best. This beauty should be easy to find in many nurseries.

Camellia minutiflora
Camellia minutiflora a recent introduction discovered in Vietnam. This plant is amazing. The growth habit is gentle and weeping with small leaves of mid-green and new growth of deep green red and even smaller flower buds hanging along stems for months as burgundy balls finally opening to the most delicate tiny flowers of white and red-pink flecks, this plant is a delight all year round and would be an excellent pot specimen in a small area but I know when people see minuteiflora they want to have one for themselves. It's not easy to find for sale but its about in some specialist nurseries, you will know it when you see it and im sure you will fall in love instantly.

Camellia amplexicaulis
Camellia amplexicaulis is the most remarkable camellia. It is a recent discovery from Vietnam, like *minutiflora*, very new to the scene. This Camellia is like no other I've ever seen. It has large shiny clearly veined leaves of up to 30 cm and the new growth is pink-red, making this plant visually striking at any level. For extra effect the flowers develop along the stems as pink red balls, up to golf ball size before opening to display a medium sized pink red flower with a subtle white edge. While the flower is attractive, for me the buds, the leaves, the new growth and the overall effect of all of these elements make this a remarkable plant and an amazing addition to the



Camellia japonica 'tinsie'



Camellia minutiflora

Camellia family. Of course, with large shiny leaves *amplexicaulis* doesn't like sun very much so its best grown as an understory plant protected from wind and in shade, yes that all sounds a bit specific and limiting but remember this plant was found thriving half way up a mountain under much larger trees. This remarkable plant can be found well protected in some specialist nurseries and if you are lucky enough to find and purchase one take great care of it. It truly is an amazing plant.

CAMELLIA FACTS

There are more than 250 species of Camellia. They originate from East and South East Asia and China. The Camellia is amongst the most popular of garden shrubs and as a result a profusion of beautiful and varied garden varieties has been produced. Most of the many thousands of cultivars now listed are descended from *Camellia japonica*, introduced to Europe from China in the early eighteenth century. *Camellia sasanqua* and *Camellia reticulata*, have also produced many cultivars.